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## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOMS: A CASE STUDY ON THE INTERNATIONALIZATION IN INDONESIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** Internationalization has been done in some Indonesian universities, including University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The program has opened a wider opportunity for foreign lecturers to share their experiences with the students within the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. In addition to that, this program has also provided a greater chance for international students to enroll at the university. The number of International students in the University of Muhammadiyah Malang indeed has increased over the years. In regards to that, this present study identified challenges faced by the international students in the multicultural classroom. In doing so, the study involved six international students from two different countries; China and Thailand. The students studied at English Language Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. Using questionnaires and a semi-structured interview, this study analyzed the result thematically. The research findings revealed five areas of challenges that the International students experienced in the university.

**Keywords:** *international students, multiculturalism, internationalization*

## INTRODUCTION

### Research Background

Universities around the globe has improved their awareness for internationalization. In Indonesian context, the program emphasized on every aspects such as educational facilities, curriculum, lecturers exchange, teaching methods, the use of English, and the international partnership (Abduh, Rosamaladewi, & Basri, 2018). University of Muhammadiyah Malang is one of the universities which concern about Internationalization program(Nurbatra, 2017b). Some foreign lecturers involves in academic activities within or beyond the classroom. Moreover, with the presence of International students enrolled in the university program, international atmosphere is existed in some classes in the university. The program fosters multicultural education to be implemented in classes in the higher education level. Indeed, the main purpose of higher education is to prepare students in a multicultural society for a professional work (Logvinova & Ivanova, 2016). By having international exposure, it is expected that UMM graduates are able to compete in this interconnected world.

In accordance to that, the number of International students enrolled in the university has increased significantly over the year. The international students enrolled in English Language Education Department at Faculty of Teacher and Education studied with the local students as they shared English as the common language of instruction. They mingled in a multicultural class as Indonesia itself is a multicultural country with multi ethnicity, languages, and cultural and social background. Indeed, multiculturalism is inseparable in Internationalization of Indonesian Higher Education.

Multiculturalism have been adopted in some countries like Australia, US and Canada since 1970s (Watkins & Watkins, 2017), Russia (Zorina, Vygodchikova, Gatin, & Munira, 2016), and India (Bindhu, 2016). Indonesia is multicultural country which is indicated from the diverse culture existing across the nation. The diverse culture in different areas language is represented through diverse language, race, ethnicity, religion, belief and tradition. Multiculturalism is regarded as an appreciation of diversity, instead of an effort for uniformity (Beairisto & Carrigan, 2004 in Kowaluk, 2016). It shows that multiculturalism is a progressive movement for a harmonious global community which values diversity in a positive notions. There are variety of languages, races, ethnicities, traditions, and religions embodied in different kinds of culture. These cannot be separated from social and individual communication and attitudes (Amri, Tahir, & Ahmad, 2017). It is inevitable for humankind to live with others who have different culture or even perspectives. As the consequence, multiculturalism takes place in every aspect in the country, including in education. It is believed that education plays essential role in multiculturalism (Rohman & Lessy, 2017). He further argues that multiculturalism affects school environment, as the students need to mingle in a melting pot of culture, religion, faith, age and racial background. This is where the multicultural education takes place.

One of the important factors in a multicultural classroom is intercultural competence. Not only the teacher, but students need to have this form of cultural sensitivity in their learning process. Harris & Smith (2018) suggests that cultural awareness can be improved through students' participation in narrative writing, particularly journal writing, autobiography, and meaningful discussion. Multicultural education enables students to share different concept, events, experience, or issues from diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Rohman & Lessy, 2017). In my current class, there are some Chinese and Thai students who involve in an engaging environment especially in discussion or mingle activities. To give an example, when the topic of the day was New Year celebrations, students from different part in the country shared their

experience in celebrating the New Year. The other students from China and Thailand also participate in the discussion and embrace the mutual respect among them.

Although the international students are excited to participate in my multicultural class, there are three issues that I identified. Based on the preliminary observation, international students in UMM tend to communicate with their peers using their mother tongue. It was difficult for them to mingle with other or local students. This affects their social interaction in the classroom and the real life. Thai students in this case is regarded to be unapproachable (L. Brown, 2009). In addition to that, they prefer to live in the same accommodation which strict them from being exposed with wider cultural environment. Based on Li's work (2016), it is reported that Chinese students focus more on their academic rather than a real life experience. They prioritize their academic achievement over lifetime experience beyond classroom through meaningful friendship. The same notion is also mentioned by Zorina, Vygodchikova, Gatin, & Munira(2016) which reported slightly the same situation occurred in Russian setting. This proves how difficult it is to conduct a sustainable multicultural education which exists not only within the classroom but also beyond it. Despite the fact that multicultural education relies on the role of teachers, the study of students' difficulties in the actual practice is still poorly conducted. Furthermore, there are limited qualitative studies investigating the problems or difficulties in the students' perspectives. Based on these arguments, this study is conducted to reveal the International students' perspective particularly towards their difficulties they experienced in multicultural classroom at University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

## **Research Problems**

Driven by the purpose of the study, the research is conducted to investigate the difficulties faced by International students in the multicultural classroom at University of Muhammadiyah Malang.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Internationalization in Higher Education**

Internationalization is an initiative to engage with other overseas institutions, lecturers, staffs or students. The program is important as for it is not only can improve academic performance, but also ensure revenue increase (Arsenault, 2018). It is implied that internationalization in Higher Education has foster the improvement of facilities, human resources, infrastructures, etc to support the program. As a result, with the increased recognition, the university gained increased revenue.

There are three major indication of internationalization in HE. Altbach and Wit (2018) stated that Internationalization in Higher Education is indicated by the wider use of English as language for instruction, the increased number of International students, more opportunities for learning and teaching exchange as well as joint research. The use of English as lingua franca has fueled up the internationalization of Higher Education which transform the landscape of HE into global ones (Ha, 2018).

One of consideration for Asian students in choosing neighboring countries for the international learning experience is on geographical proximity (A. Li, 2018). The argument is supported by the fact that in the University of Muhammadiyah Malang, the International students are mostly from neighboring Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, and China.

### **International Students**

Significant increase in Student mobility has been identified as an impact of internationalization of Higher Education institutions (Marangell, Arkoudis, & Baik, 2018)

International students need to develop three types of social network: monocultural, bicultural, and multicultural network (S. Li & Zizzi, 2018). Monocultural network is the interaction they need to have with the peers from their home countries, while Bicultural network exist when the international students interact with the students from host country. Latly, multicultural network is the interaction between international students with other international students from different country.

### **Multiculturalism**

In this interdependent and interconnected world, multiculturalism is inevitable. Multiculturalism is regarded as a structure of beliefs and actions which both acknowledge, respect, and value all varied cultural differences within an organization or society (Yusof 2003 in Singh 2016). Rooted from historical view, multicultural education was pioneered by James Bank who conducted a study of multiculturalism in the school setting back in 1980s. There are three different framework in multiculturalism, namely conservative, liberal and critical. The conservative multiculturalism expects the marginalized groups to assimilate themselves into the mainstream culture so that they can gain the equal status (Gorski, 2006). In this type of multiculturalism, perspectives from marginalized group are disregarded, because they need to integrate themselves in the mainstream group. On the other hand, liberal multiculturalism value, appreciate and support cultural diversity (Alismail, 2016). However, when it comes to

practice, liberal multiculturalism is regarded not to equality. Lastly, critical multiculturalism is the one which values social justice and it also opposes the racial and cultural discrimination. This type of multiculturalism also promotes democracy because it respects inequalities in culture, norms and values (Alismail, 2016).

According to Kowaluk(2016) Multicultural education is an approach to assess and address discriminatory practices in education. It relies on the role of the school to promote social transformation against injustice, oppression and discrimination. Therefore, multicultural education is mainly aimed to assist pupils in their attitudes, knowledge and skills development as part of global community (Banks, 2001). It highlighted the students' crucial transformation of their skill, knowledge and attitudes towards cultural, regional, or even racial differences. More specifically in the school system, Yildrim&Tezci(2016) argues that multicultural education is intended to establish social justice, peace and tolerance in a culturally diverse groups. Furthermore, Gabdulchakov, Galimova&Yashina also believes that effective multicultural education reduced the aggression among academics in university. In addition to that, in multicultural education, teacher needs to spread positive attitudes with cultural sensitivity (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The same view also expressed by

In this modern world, globalization and internationalization which affects multiculturalism is inevitable. Multiculturalism have spread to different parts of the world, including US, Canada, India, China, Russia and Indonesia (Bindhu, 2016; Watkins & Watkins, 2017; Zorina et al., 2016). In Indonesian context, practice of multiculturalism is fostered by the diverse cultural, social, and racial background of the people. Indonesian people tend to be familiar with the differences in many aspects, including in the field of education.

## **Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education is carried out based on the principles of human dignity, justice, equality, and liberty as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights (Nadda, 2017). It gives forces to any type of education which blends traditions, values, beliefs and histories of people from diverse cultural background. Nadda (2017) also points out that multicultural education values the cultural difference positively and highly oppose all forms of discrimination takes place particularly at school and other educational institutions. By promoting democracy, equality and social justice, the multicultural education is seen to be powerful to address any type of discrimination.

Similarly, Singh and Raza (2016) defined Multicultural education as a pedagogical approach which is constructed on democratic values that nurture cultural pluralism in an

interconnected world. This definition points out the existence of multiculturalism in educational practice within or beyond the classroom. A Buddhist monk, Chin Kung, advocated multicultural education to eliminate conflicts due to religious affair and promote world's harmony throughout the globe. Chin Kung, driven by his beliefs, sees multicultural education as one of Buddhist Teachings, and he was succeeded to campaign for equal communication and cooperation in Southeast Asia (An, 2016).

Multicultural education can be carried out through multicultural classroom. Nadda(Nadda, 2017) states that multicultural classroom is the one which various cultural background of students forms a varied learning environment. Classrooms are vibrant places filled with complex relationship between students and teacher (Zhu, 2017), therefore, a multicultural classrooms embodied in multicultural education evolve.

Banks (in Singh & Raza 2016) identified five main elements of multicultural education. First, is 'content integration' which the immersion of diverse cultural values and issues in the materials. Teacher needs to integrate the cultural difference into the content of the lesson. Second is 'Knowledge Construction' which enable the students to construct their own knowledge in learning process (Banks in Singh & Raza 2016). The third element is 'Prejudice Reduction' which emphasize on the positive attitudes towards cultural or racial differences. In the classroom, students should not discriminate other culture in their verbal or behavioral participation. Fourth is 'Equity Pedagogy' which provides fair opportunity to students in their academic experiences. The last element in multicultural education is 'Empowering School Culture and Society Culture' which can be identified from the school transformation which facilitate students with varied racial and cultural background to have equal experience.

### **Objectives of Multicultural Education**

Multicultural Education is believed to benefit for students, teachers, school and in a greater scheme, the country. For students, as Aydin (2013) argued, the multicultural education enable students to be aware of racial and ethnic differences that lead to the transformation to their attitudes, skills, knowledge and behavior. In Indian context, Multicultural Education also aims to promote equality and social justice for students (Viswanath & Srilakshmi, 2016). In Indonesian Islamic school setting, students' knowledge is enhanced by providing equality although there are different viewpoints (Amri et al., 2017). On the other hand, Chin Kung who activelycampaign for multiculturalism based on Buddhism, believes that multicultural education is an opportunity to work together to eliminate discrimination and prejudice.

In this regard, teachers in multicultural classes tend to have ability to develop their skills that promote awareness, tolerance, and empathy in the class so that the diversity is regarded as an advantage (Tonbuloglu, Aslan, & Aydin, 2016). By being expose to diverse cultural content, students will be open minded, and accordingly, they will value differences more positively.

### **Difficulties in Multicultural Education**

Singh and Raza (2016) mentioned four challenges in Multicultural Education. The first challenge is regarding the teachers' capacity which requires them to master paradigm and concepts in multicultural education, to identify historical and cultural knowledge existing in the society and also to propose supportive curriculum and the teaching approach. In regard to this, teacher needs to have adequate skills in integrating students' diverse culture into classroom experience (Alismail, 2016). The second challenge in Multicultural Education is the curriculum which does not facilitate the approach. Viswanath & Srilakshmi(2016) recognizes that in designing language curriculum, particularly, it is not easy because language curriculum should be universal that can be accepted and implemented beyond the cultural gap; but at the same time, every culture should be integrated in the curriculum. The third challenge is the teacher's complexity in executing the lesson which may not supported adequately. To give an example, different pronunciation of each culture may lead to miscommunication between students and teacher (Viswanath & Srilakshmi, 2016). This could be challenging because teacher should bridge the cultural barrier. Lastly, Multicultural Education also put teacher in difficulty especially when they have to deal with school system, administration, and parents. This oblige the teacher to be creative in integrating multicultural lesson in the present curricula. As Tonbuloglu, Aslan, and Aydin (Tonbuloglu et al., 2016) reported in their research that the application of multicultural education highly relies on the teachers' competency. (Dalton & Expectations, 2008)

### **Students' perspectives**

Study reveal that students' perspective is an important aspect particularly in education because it can be used as reference for educational improvement and educational reforms (Cook-Sather, 2002). For students, this type of study aims to improve their critical reflection on their attitudes and beliefs so that they can also transform themselves significantly (A. Brown, 2016).

It is understood to see the world in the students' view (Clark, 1995 in Cook-Sather, 2002). Students indeed have distinct way to see the dynamics of policies and performance. It

supports the definition of perspective as ‘structures of assumptions and expectations that frame an individual’s tacit point of view and influence their thinking, beliefs and actions (Taylor, 2008).

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The current research applied case study which the researcher focused on the event, program, or activity of each individual (Stake, 1993 in Creswell, 2012). Adding to this, Nunan (1992) stated that case study involves a range of data collection and analysis, not only applying single procedures. Since a case study requires extensive data collection (Creswell, 2012), multiple procedures are employed to comprehensively explore the individuals, program, institution being investigated.

### **Research Subject**

The research collected the data from six international students who are enrolled in English Department, University of Muhammadiyah Malang academic year 2017/2018. The selected students are from Thailand and China who experienced multicultural classroom in their learning experience.

### **Research Instrument**

For the research objective, data was collected from class observation, questionnaire and interview. The first, observation was conducted in order to know the international students’ behavior in the multicultural classroom. The researcher employed participant observation as the researcher was the teacher of the class. Secondly, questionnaires were distributed in order to identify challenges and solutions in various perspectives. The questionnaire will be an open ended ones to give space for research subjects to express their thoughts. Lastly, interview was conducted as one of instrument for the purpose to gain further information about challenges and ways to cope them in internship program they have experienced. Semi-structured interview was employed in the study to have a clear description from research subjects.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The research reveal there are five challenges experienced by International students at University Muhammadiyah Malang which covers in different areas.

### **Language**

Language plays important role in communication. Oyewo (2000 in Li, 2018) defined communication as “the process of transmitting, receiving, and acting upon message/



information, thoughts, ideas, attitudes and feelings through mutually agreed understandable/ determined codes/ symbols”. In their communication, international students in Indonesian multicultural classes experienced difficulty in the following aspects:

- **Interaction with peers**

The use of English as International language is inevitable in multicultural classroom, especially with international students in the class. Based on interview with an international student from Thailand, they had difficulties in interacting with students from host country especially at the beginning of their overseas experience in the institution. Barsa, the Thai student, stated that: “...mula mula (at the beginning) it’s difficult, because it’s different”. Barsa who is a Thai student, speaks in Malay in her home country in South Thailand. Although Malay and Bahasa Indonesia are quite similar, there are differences that restraint their understanding. It is different from the view of Chinese international students in UMM who felt uncomfortable situation when the peers use Bahasa Indonesia. One of them, Jennifer, said that: “When my friends, when my classmate talk in the class, used Bahasa Indonesia, I always confuse, I don’t know, so I will ask them and let them told me in English like that”

From the above statement, it is indicated that although the classmates are aware of the use of English as international language, they still use Bahasa Indonesia in the classroom interaction which put the international students in uncomfortable situation. They were uncomfortable because they could not understand the talk at all. They then ask their peers to translate the statements into English to make is understandable. In regards to this, Li (H. Li, 2018) analyzed that the low proficiency in English is affected by the low learning efficacy and the low exposure in English. She further asserts that English in a multicultural classroom can be used as medium of instruction that progressively helps the learning process

- **Interaction with teachers**

The next challenge that the International students experience is in regards to the classroom interaction with teachers. Three of the involved international students admitted that they were reluctant to talk to the lecturers about their learning problems. Nur Ainee, the Thai student, stated that she was ‘afraid’ of the teacher. She had an experience that the lecturer spoke very fast in explaining the lesson so that she could not understand the materials well. She did not always ask the lecturer for further clarification, as she preferred to ask her peers. In the interview, Nur Ainee stated: “Sometimes I ask teacher, but most of the times, not. I ask my friends instead.”

Slightly similar, Ming (Chinese student) mentioned that she had difficulty in understanding the lecturer's explanation because of different accent. Some lecturers indeed have a strong Javanese accent which influence their pronunciation. Ming commented that: "Some teachers have an accent. I try my best to hear, but sometimes it's difficult."

In addition, with the fact that they are enrolled in English Language Education Department, English is the language of instruction in the class. However, based on the questionnaire, the international student from Thailand and China still have difficulties in the classroom activities where the lessons are not taught in English. This happened because some educational subjects are taught in Bahasa Indonesia which also mainly concern on the Indonesian educational policies. The International students found it difficult to comprehend the materials which emphasizes on Indonesian educational policies, but also delivered in local language. There is also Bahasa Indonesia subject in which all students learn about Indonesian language. To support this idea, Tania, one of Thai students stated: "He (teacher) always says "If you want to come here, you have to know before, you have to study about Indonesian Language. But why you talk in English, why you write in English, why you do like that, and I cannot give you score because this is Bahasa Indonesia Language subject, but you answer in English". He (teacher) complains and I like how can I start, how can I understand Indonesia Language in three months, it impossible you can; but he never understands.

In order to deal with this, the international students asked help from their Indonesian peers to translate the meaning so that they understand the materials. Furthermore, the students also mentioned that using online translating tools such as Google translate help them a lot in the learning process especially when they have a long text in Bahasa Indonesia. In regards to this, Lawyer (Lawyer, 2018) believes that the gap in the multicultural classroom affect the learning environment as tension may appear. The teacher is expected to create a safe and supportive learning environment so that international and local students can learn at best in multicultural classroom. In addition, learning environment and the teacher training needs to be transformed to accommodate diverse students in multicultural classroom (Chang, Pak, & Sleeter, 2018). In other words, teacher is encouraged to develop culturally responsive pedagogy in which embraces the diversity in the multicultural classroom (Sleeter, 2018). Thomas and Chennapragada(2018)stated that teachers in a multicultural classroom needs to be more prepared in teaching diverse classroom.

## **Punctuality**

International students are expected to be aware of the culture, norms, and habits that exist in the host country. However, to accept and adapt with local culture may take some times. Based on the data analysis, the international students complained about Indonesian perception on time. Indonesian sees time as very flexible, as they may come fifteen minutes, thirty minutes, even an hour late for appointments with friends. Both Thai and Chinese students mentioned that they have difficulties in coping with that, because back home, they are very punctual. When they have made appointments for group discussion, they firstly did not expect delay so they came on time. They waited for about an hour to have all the members on the table. The following interview excerpt with Jennifer, Chinese student, supports the view: “Indonesian people (are) always not, punctual. When we have homework, or assignment, but we must finish homework with our classmate, in group. I always wait, wait them long time, maybe one hour, or two hours..”

To deal with this, the international students then adapt themselves by expecting delays on every meeting that they have with their peers. Interestingly, one of them stated that they came a half of hour late, but the peers even came at an hour late. This finding extends cross cultural adaptation theory which is affected by interpersonal relationship of international students in short and long term. The theory highlights the importance of making friendship with students from host country ((Kim, 2001 in Hendrickson, 2018). The social interaction of the students in the classroom and off the classroom improve the potential for international and the host national students to build friendship that influence cross-cultural adaptation process.

## **Appearance**

The next challenge is in regards to cultural differences that occur between the host country and their home countries. The difference can be seen firstly from the appearance. In UMM, students are expected to wear formal outfit when they learn at the university. However, all the Chinese students firstly had a problem in their appearance as they are regarded to be not formal. Their Indonesian friends tried to inform them that they need to wear more appropriate clothes which also based on Islamic values in the university. In fact, the Chinese students do not know anything about Islam until they came to the university. Jennifer mentioned that: “In my home country I can wear anything I want to wear, does not have to be the long ones. Here I cannot wear shorts.”

In this case, the Chinese students did not have the prior knowledge and awareness on this religious issue, but that is negotiable. Each cultural groups are equal and they have the

equal freedom to express themselves (W. Zhang, 2017). The freedom includes the freedom in their appearance as they can express themselves freely in their own way. International students adapt themselves with the host culture so that they can blend better. The view is supported by Jamaludin and Sam (2018) who stated that international students need time for orientation to the host culture. Further, their research highlights the benefit of sociocultural adaptation for international students that they tend to recommend and to return to the host destination.

This difficulty, however, is not experienced by Thai students as they have the common values which emphasized on Islamic values in every parts of life including appearance. The multicultural education experienced by the international students, according to Sleeter (2018), should sustain the heterogeneous practices which are rooted from diverse cultural values.

## **Values**

Different cultural background may contribute to different values existing in a certain cultural communities. In this regard, the values applied in University of Muhammadiyah Malang is driven by Indonesian local values and Islamic values, particularly Muhammadiyah. Both values shapes how the teaching and learning is conducted within the university. The present research found out that International students experience challenge in accepting the local values. For example, the use of hand is seen as different meaning. For students from the host country (Indonesia), they are accustomed to give in anything using right hand. Using left hand in giving in means negative. The same notion is mentioned by Thai students as they also have strong Islamic values in their home country. Differently, Chinese students think that it is okai for them to use any of those hands to deliver anything. Sandy, one of the Chinese students, stated: “Indonesian people taught us we can’t use our left hand to give something to other. I always “okay” because I don’t know why we can’t use left hand. In China it’s up to you, we can use any hand just up to you.”

The different values is also shaped by religion. As previously mentioned, UMM has a strong Islamic values which for Chinese students is difficult to understand. It is because they mentioned that they do not have religion, so the concept to have God, angel, prophet, is something completely strange for them. In this regard, Jennifer (Chinese student) stated: “Religion? Because we don’t have religion, we just believe our self. And my classmate from Indonesia, our topic is religion right? Yea God, and the Moslem and I don’t know, I am so sorry, yea I’m so sorry before I come here I never to find about Moslem.”

In regards to this, Li (2018) believes that the diverse values existing in a multicultural classroom enable students to improve their awareness, respect and understanding of the values

of others. Similarly, Barker (2018) who conducted a case study to International students also stated that some topics in multicultural classroom are hard to discuss because of unfamiliarity; but the students were happy as they learn something new. In fact, Nation and Newton (2009 in Barker, 2018) believes that topic familiarity is essential for fluency development in language learning class.

## **Academic Activities**

- **Paper writing**

The present research reveal that the next challenge experienced by international students at UMM is in regards to paper writing. Writing paper is the commonly used assignment for students learning at Higher Education level. In the case of UMM, most subjects require the students to compose paper with different topics and objectives. The Thai students admitted in the interview that they had difficulties in making academic paper, as they never had any experience in their home country. One of the Thai students named Nur Ainee stated: “We never make makalah (academic paper), only presentation.”. Further, when the researcher asked her how she made the academic paper, she mentioned that the paper is designed to be composed by having a group work. In this case, the Thai student relied on the other students in the group. She said that: “In the group, I say (discuss) but I did not make the paper”

Indeed, paper writing is a common activity for students (Chehlova, Keviša, & Chehlov, 2018). They may work individually, in pair, or in group to complete the assignment. Like what happened in Japanese contex (Barker, 2018), international Thai students in Indonesia were able to involve in group discussion although it is challenging to create the paper. Collaborative learning play essential role in multicultural education. This is also suggested by Lawyer (2018) who stated that students need to be given autonomy in their learning process, including in their group work. By having collaboration, students exchange information, support, influence and help each other (Papakonstantinopoulou, 2018).

Different from Thai students, Chinese students in the UMM have problems with the length in academic paper making. They stated that in their home country, they are expected to create a long passage to have good grades. This is completely different with Indonesian academic paper which emphasizes on a more efficient and effective text. The difficulties is confirmed by Zhang and Brunton (2007) who stated that Chinese International students struggled with academic paper writing in New Zealand. In addition, the students also face difficulty in their group participation. Although they felt that their voices in the group discussion are not adequately accommodated. When the researcher asked about the students’

engagement in group discussion, Ming, a Chinese student stated that: “They pick up a little of us, and I feel sad about it”

Further, Ming stated that group work may get challenging because it was hard to have common ideas. She asserted that it was because the culture is different. From her statements, it is indicated that the international students may encounter this as issue that they need to cope not only in their social, but also academic life. The same challenged is experienced by students in Russian setting that they do not have adequate interaction skills in culturally diverse classroom (Logvinova & Ivanova, 2016).

- **Writing Composition**

The other challenge that the international students experienced in UMM is the different learning expectation in writing. Few differences were identified in Chinese and Thai context. In China, the students were expected to compose a long English writing, so that longer means better. However, in the host country (Indonesia) the composition is expected to be brief and efficient. This confused the Chinese students at the beginning. The following interview excerpt with Ming indicated the argument: “Indonesian class in English writing is different from Chinese. Indonesian product in English writing is simpler, more briefs. In China, we need to write some words, and then the teacher more like our writing.”

The main objective of language activities in multicultural classroom is to develop the students’ skills in making decision with critical thinking and solving problems with communicative actions(H. Li, 2018). With the different learning activities, students are challenged to solve problems they found. In this case, discussions with teachers and peers help the international students’ participation as it enhances the students self- esteem, assessment, and confidence (Pedagogical Institute, 2003 in Papakonstantinou, 2018).

- **Classroom activities**

The research reveals that both group of International students have difficulties in the classroom activities as it is different with the one in their home countries. The classroom activities in the English Language Education Department, UMM give a lot of opportunities for the students to practice their language skills in discussion, presentation, or role play. On the contrary, in China, such activities are not adequately provided as the teacher always give lecture. Ming stated: “In China, the teacher always teach. The activities is a less more than in Indonesia. Teacher more serious to students. Teachershareknowledge with book.”

The same notion is also exposed by Thai students who stated that in their home country teacher do not provide a lot of opportunities for students to practice English, they relies on the

paper exam that is conducted at the end of the learning process. The learning process focuses more on grammar and translation, so that the assessment is conducted by having a paper exam. Tania, the Thai students, stated: “In Thailand, I study so high but cannot talk in English, because I don’t have anyone to talk in English. The lecturer teach the subject in Thai language. They would do like this, they will just write and give me the information about this words, this sentences, translate to English this sentences, and go to exam.”

Exam is stressful for both international students (Hechanova-ALampay, Beehr, Christiansen and Van Hoen, 2002 in Wang, Tian, Fujiki, & Bordon, 2017) and local students. However, in a language class, students need to be given wide opportunities to practice the language. As Sleeter (2018) that students with diverse cultural background need to be given fair opportunity to both cooperate and collaborate.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The current research revealed five challenges experienced by international students at University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The challenges were identified in different areas, such as language, punctuality, appearance, values and academic activities. Indeed, learning in diversity can be both fun and challenging in Indonesian multicultural classroom (Nurbatra, 2018). In accordance to that, it is suggested that the international students have prior knowledge about their target country so that they can minimize the challenges with adequate awareness and preparation.

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